

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 14th December, 2010 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)
Councillor J Narraway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Arnold, G Baxendale, D Brickhill, S Conquest, J Crockatt,
H Davenport, J P Findlow and D Topping

Apologies

Councillors M Davies, P Edwards and S Wilkinson

68 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED –That the minutes of the meeting held on the 12 October 2010 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

70 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no Members of the Public present who wished to make a statement.

71 SHARED SERVICES

At its meeting held on 12 October 2010, the committee had received a presentation on the range and scope of shared services provided for Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils. At that meeting, Members had raised a number of queries which related, amongst other things, to the operation of the Shared Services Joint Committee; the need to have a better understanding of the proposed legal entity in respect of HR and ICT; and future proposals for the former County European and External Funding Unit.

Councillors David Brown (Performance and Capacity Portfolio Holder) and Peter Mason (Procurement, Assets and Shared Services Portfolio Holder) both of whom were Members of the Shared Services Joint Committee, attended the meeting and gave explanations in relation to a number of outstanding queries from the previous meeting. The Portfolio Holders were assisted by the Borough Treasurer.

The Committee was informed that the Shared Services Joint Committee had taken a decision to close the former County European and External Funding Unit

a few months ago. Cheshire East did however have a vacant post of External Funding Officer within Cheshire its establishment.

In response to a Members query about the status of each of the current 32 shared services, the Performance and Capacity Portfolio Holder undertook to provide members of the Committee with a position statement on each shared service.

In connection with the creation of a separate legal entity in respect of HR and ICT and other support services, the Borough Treasurer informed the Committee that this would provide an opportunity for new arrangements for Cheshire East and its partners. Two options were currently being explored.

The first option was in the form of a trading operation which would allow the Council to offer to sell services to smaller local authorities and public sector organisations, by trading with such organisations as customers. The second option was a more collaborative model which would allow the Council to work in partnership with other public sector organisations. The two models were not mutually exclusive and a combination of models could be put in place.

A report on County Farms was due to be considered by the Committee in January.

RESOLVED

1. That the Performance and Capacity Portfolio Holder be requested to provide a position statement on each of the 32 shared services and distribute it to Members of this committee via the Senior Scrutiny Officer;
2. That copies of agendas of the Shared Services joint committee be circulated to Members of this Committee in advance of meetings from now on, and copies of minutes of meetings be also circulated subsequently;
3. That David Job, County Land Agent, be requested to submit a report on the future of Council owned farms to the Midpoint meeting of this Committee to be held on 11 January 2011.

72 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor setting out the 2010/2011 work programme.

At the midpoint meeting on 2 November, Members had informally agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to review the 4 Business Generation Centres owned by Cheshire East. Subsequent to that meeting, volunteers were sought from this Committee. Three Members volunteered and met on 9 December to scope the review. During the scoping exercise, Members had acknowledged that there were close links between the management of the Business Generation Centres as

Council assests and their role in Economic Development and the Task and Finish Group had therefore suggested that an additional place should be created and offered to the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

Members had also requested additional information on the depot rationalisation proposals that were currently being progressed through an officer project group. A report on this matter appeared later on the agenda for this meeting.

Councillor J Narraway referred to the item in the work programme relating to the ICT Harmonisation Monitoring Group and suggested that the terms of reference of this group were too wide and suggested that the focus of the group should be restricted to the Macclesfield Data Centre.

RESOLVED –

1. That the following Members be appointed to the Business Generation CentreTask and Finish Group:

Councillors J Narraway
 P Findlow
 A R Thwaite

2. That a place be offered to Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on the Business generation Task and Finish Group;
3. That the item relating to ICT Harmonisation be amended to read 'Macclesfield Data Centre'.

73 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION PROTOCOL

On 30 October 2009, the Council had approved a Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) protocol.

The CCfA protocol was intended to strengthen Member involvement at Ward level through the provision of timely, relevant information on local issues in line with the principles outlined in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act which emphasised the importance of the role of Ward Members as community leaders and advocated their empowerment to deal with local issues.

To date, there had only been one request received to invoke the CCfA procedure. Notwithstanding the fact that in that particular case, the Member concerned did not provide evidence that all available options to resolve the matters raised in the CCfA had been explored, the range of problems raised by the Member, did highlight the fact that there was a gap in the protocol in how cross cutting issues should be handled. On this occasion, in the absence of any formal advice, the Scrutiny Chairs Group (SCG) had been consulted informally. This had given Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees an opportunity to explore at an early stage, the written evidence supplied by the Member concerned, in support of the CCfA. Additionally,

Members concluded that the SCG was the most appropriate place for requests for CCfA to be considered, where the subject matter affected more than one Committee.

The Scrutiny Chairs Group had therefore recommended that the protocol be amended to give the SCG a role in determining which of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees should deal with cross cutting issues.

RESOLVED

That it be recognised that the Scrutiny Chairmen's Group should determine which of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees should deal with cross cutting issues raised under CCfA and Council be recommended to authorise the Borough Solicitor to make appropriate reference to the Scrutiny Chairs Group role in the CCfA protocol, by amending section 7 of the protocol.

74 DEPOT RATIONALISATION

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Places regarding a programme to rationalise Council Depots in Cheshire East.

The Council had inherited depots from the three former Borough Councils and the County Council. Many of the depots were in the wrong locations, were too small and had buildings in poor condition and did not meet current and future operational requirements. Efficiencies could be achieved by amalgamating operations into a reduced number of large depots

A review had commenced to evaluate future options for all depots used for Cheshire East business. This included Council owned sites used by external contractors. The review also included sites outside Cheshire East boundaries which were used in relation to Cheshire East vehicles.

All property implications arising from this review would be taken forward and resolved as part of the wider Corporate Asset Challenge programme.

The purpose and vision of the review was to:

- Evaluate future options for all depots used for Cheshire East business. This included Council owned sites used by external contractors.
- Decommission depots that did not meet current and future business needs within a phased plan
- Explore opportunities for capital receipts and revenue reductions
- Move the Council towards its vision of 2 super depots in Crewe and Macclesfield
- Ensure that there was the capacity to meet all operational needs during the transition process
- Rationalise stock held at sites

Expected outcomes of the review were:

- A reduction in the number of operational depots

- Opportunities for alternative uses for surplus depots
- Revenue budget reductions
- Capital receipts from land sales
- Capital receipts from the sale of surplus equipment
- Increase in operational efficiencies

Analysis of the findings and evaluation of options would take place during Dec 2010 –January 2011.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the Strategic Director Places be requested to provide regular updates on the depot rationalisation project to this committee.

75 URGENCY DECISION -

The Chairman reported upon the circumstances of a decision taken by the Chief Executive under urgency powers in relation to which he had waived the 'Call-in' procedure in accordance with the Scrutiny rules contained in the Council's Constitution. The matter was deemed to be an exempt matter under the access to information Act 1985, and therefore the details of the decision could not be disclosed in the presence of the press and public.

76 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee considered items currently listed in the forward plan

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

77 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.50 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)